

HAMMOND WOMAN'S CLUB HEARS A "VICE REPORT"

Houses and Disorderly Houses.

"It is true that I own the Foss place. Esher and I are interested in it together. The records show that. It's a saloon and boarding house. I don't know much about it. Foss runs it. I guess if the people of this town didn't want places like Foss' here they could easily get rid of them."—William Thompson, police commissioner of Hammond, Ind.

An echo of the Chicago vice investigation was heard in Hammond last night, when Miss Virginia Brooks, in an address before the Hammond Woman's club, directly charged that three Lake county public officials were owners of gambling houses and disorderly resorts.

Miss Brooks' address was in the nature of a "vice report," but she made no effort to conceal the "key" to her remarks.

She declared that John Becker, a township trustee, owns a building on State street, West Hammond, which is devoted to the lowest forms of vice. The place, says Miss Brooks, is managed by "Con" Toltz, a notorious character, who went to Hammond after being driven out of Joliet.

William Thompson, a police commissioner, was the next person whose connection with the underworld was exposed by Miss Brooks. She said he was the owner of the notorious Foss place on Plummer avenue. Then she mentioned B. E. Esher, county assessor of Lake county.

"Esher," she said, "is Thompson's partner. He tries to conceal it, but he shares in the profits of the place. His moral responsibility for what goes on there is just as great as Foss' is."

Mrs. Esher, wife of the accused official, was in the audience. She sprang to her feet, angrily.

"It is not true. The place is owned by Thompson. It's lies, lies. My husband doesn't own that place. He has nothing to do with it. You are trying to ruin him, and you are humiliating me."

There was great excitement among the women, and several of them attempted to quiet Mrs. Esher. The meeting broke up in confusion.

Miss Brooks, in describing conditions in West Hammond, told of untrammelled vice and gambling, and related disgraceful scenes which she had seen in Hammond's tenderloin. She said she had found a 7-year-old boy drunk on the street, and he told her he knew "a lady who gives me all the whisky I want."

Thompson last night admitted he was owner of the Foss place, and asserted that Esher was interested in it with him.

Esher said the charges of Miss Brooks were absolutely false, and in the face of Thompson's admission of joint ownership, declared he had no interest whatever in the Foss place.

Trustee Becker admitted he was interested in the State street place, but said he merely represented the owners, whose names he refused to give.